

{In Archive} hydraulic fracturing in the news

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White House isn't taking sides in fracking debate , DOE official says

Peter Behr, E&E reporter Energywire Published: Tuesday, July 24, 2012

PORTLAND, Ore. -- The head of an ongoing federal review of hydraulic fracturing risks said yesterday that the Obama administration is not lining up on either side in the debate over safety rules for unconventional oil and gas development.

Christopher Smith, deputy assistant secretary of the Department of Energy, said that public credibility is an essential element of the multi-agency inquiry he leads. A research plan for the study will be released for comment next month, he told a meeting of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners here.

Smith responded to a strong complaint by fellow NARUC panelist Charles Stanley, chairman and CEO of shale gas developer QEP Resources, about "misinformation" and "deliberate disinformation" coming from opponents of hydraulic fracturing.

"Our mission is not to educate the public," Smith said of the working group established by the White House in April to facilitate safe development of domestic natural gas (Greenwire, April 13). "It's not to go and make sure that people understand that everything is OK. Our mission is to make sure we demonstrate to the public that we take their concerns seriously" and let the facts speak for themselves, he said. "Our approach is to tell the whole story in ways that are much more open and much more transparent."

Smith added following the panel: "We want to make sure that communities are comfortable that real science influences the rules that mitigate risks."

Stanley said he was still looking for advocacy. "One of the important roles of DOE and the federal agencies is to look at some of these alleged [fracking] issues and debunk them," he said. Stanley agreed with Smith that as the fracking boom took off, the shale oil and gas developers did not address safety concerns effectively. "Our industry did a bad job initially of communicating," he said.

"We're not seen as a credible source, but the U.S. government, EPA, DOE, working together and really getting at sound science, can address these concerns and can debunk some of the misperceptions that exist," Stanley said.

Smith said the administration understands there is a lot of work ahead to create a dialogue on hydraulic fracturing based on science that quantifies concerns and makes sure there are rules in place to deal with the risks science has identified.

DOE, EPA and the U.S. Geological Survey will combine research capabilities in the project, titled the Interagency Working Group to Support Safe and Responsible Development of Unconventional Domestic Natural Gas Resources. Smith said the group will seek public comment on the research plan when it is issued next month.

"In terms of what the community cares about, the answer to the question '[Can] this resource development lead to problems?' ... the answer is 'Yes. Period.' Then you follow on after that," Smith said.

"What we really need is a broad record that looks at all issues [and] brings them together in a way that is transparent, consistent and that helps us understand how the different pieces fit together," Smith said.

The impact of the administration's project is not measurable, since its timetable extends past the presidential election. Current regulation of shale oil and gas development on private land is being written in the states with some common approaches and some very different rules in some cases, as a recent study by Resources for the Future documents.

"The right place to regulate this is at the state level," Stanley said, recognizing that differences in geological formations in the shale formations around the country require different approaches and rules. "In my opinion, those folks are best suited to promulgate the regulations and enforce them at the state level."

Industry funding clouds university findings

Energywire Published: Tuesday, July 24, 2012

Pennsylvania is the largest state without a natural gas production tax, due in part to a 2009 study released by Pennsylvania State University.

The report said drillers would forgo Pennsylvania operations if the state were to impose a tax, and lawmakers cited the study in rejecting a 5 percent tax proposed by then-Gov. Ed Rendell (D).

"As an advocacy tool, it worked," said Michael Wood, research director with the nonprofit Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center. "If people wanted to find a reason to vote against having the industry taxed in that way, that gave them reason to do it."

But the authors of the study failed to note that their research was sponsored by gas drillers and led by Tim Considine, an economist with a history of producing industry-friendly reports.

Considine, now at the University of Wyoming, said industry funding did not slant the Pennsylvania tax analysis.

As the United States undergoes a shale gas boom, the industry has followed in the footsteps of the tobacco industry and has begun funding university research that counters concerns raised by critics.

Companies and their trade associations are "buying the prestige" of universities that are not always transparent about their funding or are not vigilant enough to avoid bias, said Cary Nelson, president of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

"It's a growing problem across academia," said Mark Partridge, a professor of rural-urban policy at Ohio State University. "Universities are so short of money, professors are under a lot of pressure to raise research funding in any manner possible."

A June report from AAUP says that in 2008, private sources funded about 6 percent of all academic research, excluding gifts, endowments for new faculty appointments, consulting or speaking fees, honoraria, seats on company boards, commercial licensing revenue and equity in startups.

Close ties between industry and academia have triggered lawsuits in the past, especially against tobacco

companies, which for years relied on university research to downplay the risks of smoking. Today, many of the country's leading public health institutions ban tobacco funding altogether.

As tense debates over the environmental and economic implications of fracturing arise, a similar trend in the oil and gas research sphere seems to be emerging.

Although fracturing has led to affordable natural gas, critics say the benefits may not outweigh the environmental and health risks of mining cheap fuel. Fracturing, which involves pumping chemical-laced fluid into underground shale formations to access oil and gas, has been linked to groundwater contamination, high ozone levels and air pollution. Underground disposal of wastewater from fracturing has been linked to earthquakes.

Nelson of AAUP said universities need to do more to ensure objectivity when investigating such issues.

"We need a lot more disinterested research than we're getting," Nelson said. "We ought to be making policy on the basis of truly independent research, not research where people have a reason to want to please the funder" (Jim Efstathiou Jr., Bloomberg, July 23). -- PK

Drought may require conservation by drillers

Energywire Published: Tuesday, July 24, 2012

A record-breaking U.S. drought is forcing natural gas drillers to find ways to recycle and reduce the millions of gallons of water needed to complete hydraulic fracturing operations.

But conservation efforts will be costly for companies. Oklahoma-based Devon Energy Corp. estimates that it costs as much as 75 percent more to recycle wastewater than to pump it into deep wells -- a disposal method that has been heavily criticized for its potential to cause earthquakes.

"We just would like the oil and gas companies to figure out better ways, maybe a better use of this water," said Bill Midcap, renewable energy development director at the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union covering Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico. "It's a concern about the future. It is the concern about the price of water, as we look forward, and also taking water away from agriculture."

Conservation groups across the country are starting to press harder on the matter. In Texas, environmental groups are lobbying the Legislature to pass water conservation requirements during next year's session. Pennsylvania's Susquehanna River Basin Commission last week suspended water draws for oil and gas companies.

Marcellus Shale Coalition President Kathryn Klaber said the industry has been proactive about water conservation.

"The vast majority of water used to aid in responsible natural gas development across Pennsylvania is treated and recycled for future use," she wrote in an email. "Wide-scale deployment of water recycling technology, which was pioneered by Marcellus operators, has further reduced the need to source fresh water for well-completion activities."

Drillers in Pennsylvania, the Marcellus state with the most oil and gas activity, use less than one-tenth of a percent of the 9.48 billion gallons of water consumed in the state per day, according to the state Environmental Protection Department.

Talisman Energy Inc., a Canadian company that operates in Texas and Pennsylvania, said its fracturing operations -- which require high-pressure injections of water, sand and chemicals to release trapped gas -- have not been hampered by water restrictions. The area surrounding its Texas rigs has received "significant amounts of rainfall," and its Marcellus drilling has been scaled back since prices fell dramatically earlier this year, company spokeswoman Berta Gomez said in an email.

The cost of hauling fresh water for fracturing has forced some companies to recycle wastewater and use

brackish water to cut expenses, said David Burnett, director of technology at the Global Petroleum Research Institute of Texas A&M University, College Station.

"The use of fresh groundwater in south Texas has dropped by 50 percent in the last 12 months," Burnett said.

Still, it costs about 7 cents per gallon to recycle wastewater, not counting transportation. That is about 50 percent to 75 percent more expensive than injecting that fluid into underground wells, according to a presentation Devon gave before the Texas Legislature last month. But despite its affordability, deep well injection has been criticized since reports linked the practice to earthquakes in Ohio, Arkansas and other states.

Earlier this year, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources proposed wastewater disposal rules that banned drilling into some rock layers and mandated geology reviews before well approval. Since March 2011, there have been 12 quakes near a Youngstown, Ohio, disposal well, including a magnitude-4 tremor that occurred Dec. 31.

Luke Metzger, director of Environment Texas, said if the state passes conservation rules next year, other states are likely to follow (Klimasinska/Efstathiou, Bloomberg, July 23). -- PK

Price drops put development in Pa. town on hold

Energywire Published: Tuesday, July 24, 2012

In Derry, Pa., the gravel field near Mark Gera's home features a hole that could someday house a well bore, but as of now, no gas is coming from the ground, and he will receive no royalties until it does.

Gera's experience is illustrative of the situation many of the town's residents find themselves in now that natural gas price dips have led oil and gas operators to wait to drill.

Officials at Derry's only driller, WPX Energy Inc., say they plan to return and resume drilling within two years. They expect that by that time, gas prices will have rebounded from record lows.

"We consider it more of a pause," said company spokeswoman Susan Oliver.

But the halt in activity is a letdown for a community that has watched drilling boost neighboring townships into economic prosperity and turn poor farmers into retired millionaires. While the boom-bust cycle is familiar to residents in energy-rich regions, Derry's slowdown is happening much sooner than expected and at a much more fluid, month-to-month pace.

The bad times are not as dramatic. Few people are filing bankruptcies or experiencing foreclosures because of the bust. Instead, they are seeing reduced royalty checks in their mailboxes, empty roads that were once pummeled with truck traffic and delayed water projects with tenuous funding sources.

Derry residents have taken to scanning the newspaper to see if natural gas prices have risen high enough to bring back the rigs.

Town officials expect the slowdown will not be permanent.

"Why would you spend half-a-million dollars and then leave?" said Derry Supervisor Vince DeCario.

"They're coming back. Definitely coming back" (Erich Schwartzel, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, July 22). -- PK

What fracking has accomplished and how recycling is used

Herald and News (Klamath Falls, OR) - Tuesday, July 24, 2012

Author: Bloomberg News Service

Fracking has boosted the nation's output of natural gas, pushing prices down more than 70 percent in the past four years and toppling coal as the chief fuel to generate power. Gas has helped cut electricity bills,

reduce emissions of greenhouse gases when producing power and lift employment in states with large reserves, such as Colorado, Pennsylvania and Texas.

The nation's biggest reserve of trapped gas is in the Marcellus Shale, which stretches from New York to Tennessee.

"The vast majority of water used to aid in responsible natural-gas development across Pennsylvania is treated and recycled for future use," Kathryn Klaber, the president of the Marcellus Shale Coalition, a trade group representing gas producers, said in an email. "Wide-scale deployment of water- recycling technology, which was pioneered by Marcellus operators, has further reduced the need to source fresh water for well-completion activities."

Marcellus drillers in Pennsylvania use less than a 10th of a percent of the 9.48 billion gallons of water consumed every day in the state, the Pennsylvania Environmental Protection Department has reported.

Activists using drought to target fracking - Foes trying to build momentum to recycle water used in drilling

Herald and News (Klamath Falls, OR) - Tuesday, July 24, 2012

Author: Bloomberg News Service

WASHINGTON - The worst U.S. drought in a half century is putting pressure on naturalgas drillers to conserve the millions of gallons of water used in hydraulic fracturing to free trapped gas and oil from underground rock.

From Texas to Colorado to Pennsylvania, farmers, activists and opponents of the technique, also known as fracking , are using the shortage of rain to push the industry to recycle water and reduce usage - efforts that could prove costly to the industry.

More costly process

One company, Devon Energy Corp., estimates that recycling is as much as 75 percent costlier than pumping wastewater into deep wells. That disposal method, common in the industry, has also drawn complaints because it is linked to earthquakes.

"We just would like the oil and gas companies to figure out better ways, maybe a better use of this water," Bill Midcap, renewable-energy development director at the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union covering Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico, said in an interview. "It's a concern about the future, it is the concern about the price of water, as we look forward, and also taking water away from agriculture."

Environmentalists in Texas are lobbying the Legislature to pass waterconservation requirements during next year's session. In Pennsylvania, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission on July 16 suspended water intake for companies including Talisman Energy Inc., Chesapeake Energy Corp. and Exxon Mobil Corp.

Hearing on water sales lawsuit delayed

Leader, The (Corning, NY) - Tuesday, July 24, 2012

Author: Derrick Ek, Corning Leader

A court hearing in the lawsuit against the bulk water sale facility in Painted Post has been delayed until Aug. 20.

A state Supreme Court judge was supposed to hear arguments from both sides in the case on Monday, but attorneys for the respondents asked for additional time to prepare, and the request was granted.

The hearing is now set for 1:30 p.m. Aug. 20 before Judge Joseph Latham in Supreme Court, Steuben County.

The lawsuit was filed in late June by environmental groups The Sierra Club, People for a Healthy Environment and The Coalition to Protect New York, along with five local residents. They are being represented by Richard Lippes, a Buffalo-based attorney who specializes in environmental litigation.

The lawsuit was filed against the Village of Painted Post, the Wellsboro and Corning Railroad, and SWEPI LP.

The village signed a deal to sell up to 1.5 million gallons of water per day to Houston-based SWEPI LP, a Shell subsidiary, for use in high-volume hydraulic fracturing in shale drilling operations in Pennsylvania.

The Wellsboro and Corning Railroad is building the water loading facility on 12 acres of land leased from the village in the old Ingersoll-Rand foundry site. The facility includes a series of 42 filling stations along a half-mile stretch of railroad tracks.

The plan is for 42-tanker trains to fill up and take the water to an unloading/storage site in Wellsboro, Pa., where trucks can fill up and bring it to drilling sites.

As of Monday, construction in Painted Post appeared to be near completion, but it's not clear when the project will be finished. It's also unclear if the village plans to begin selling the water as soon as the station is complete, or wait for the lawsuit to be settled. Painted Post Mayor Roz Crozier did not return a message from The Leader on Monday.

The lawsuit claims the village's state-required environmental review failed to properly consider the impacts of the water deal.

The petitioners are concerned bulk sales could deplete the Corning aquifer and affect its quality, especially during dry spells. The aquifer is intended for local use, Treichler says, and she questions municipalities' right to sell large amounts of water for out-of-state use.

The lawsuit also claims the review didn't properly consider impacts such as traffic tie-ups, noise and air pollution caused by the trains, and that required state and federal permits were not obtained.

The petitioners want the water sale arrangement stopped and the review process to be done again.

A copy of the lawsuit is posted at http://newyork.sierraclub.org/gas_drilling.html

Experts tackle fracking critics

Commercial Appeal, The (Memphis, TN) - Monday, July 23, 2012

Author: Kevin Begos Associated Press

PITTSBURGH In the debate over natural gas drilling, the companies are often the ones accused of twisting the facts. But scientists say opponents sometimes mislead the public, too.

Critics of fracking often raise alarms about groundwater pollution, air pollution, and cancer risks, and there are still many uncertainties. But some of the claims have little or nothing to back them.

For example, reports that breast cancer rates rose in a region with heavy gas drilling are false, researchers told The Associated Press.

Fears that natural radioactivity in drilling waste could contaminate drinking water aren't being confirmed by monitoring, either.

And concerns about air pollution from the industry often don't acknowledge that natural gas is a far cleaner-burning fuel than coal.

The debate is becoming very emotional. And basically not using science on either side, said Avner Vengosh, a Duke University professor studying groundwater contamination who has been praised and

criticized by both sides.

Opponents of fracking say breast cancer rates have spiked exactly where intensive drilling is taking place and nowhere else in the state. The claim is used in a letter that was sent to New York's Gov. Andrew Cuomo by environmental groups and by Josh Fox, the Oscar-nominated director of Gasland, a film that criticizes the industry.

But researchers haven't seen a spike in breast cancer rates in the area, said Simon Craddock Lee, a professor of medical anthropology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

David Risser, an epidemiologist with the Texas Cancer Registry, said in an e-mail that researchers checked state health data and found no evidence of an increase in the counties where the spike supposedly occurred.

Coventry, Greene also open to drilling business

Evening Sun, The (Norwich, NY) - Monday, July 23, 2012

Author: MELISSA DECORDOVA Sun Staff Writer mdecordova@evesun.com

COVENTRY - Coventry and Greene joined a growing list of townships in Chenango County that say they are open for natural gas development.

At a meeting Friday night, members of the Coventry Town Board voted 4 to 1 to put their confidence in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's ability to harvest their shale gas resources in a safe manner.

The resolution adopted was the same one being offered by the Central New York Landowners Coalition and adopted by the towns of Bainbridge, Guilford and Afton over the last two weeks.

Preston adopted its own pro-drilling resolution.

In Greene, Supervisor Jack Cook wrote a letter to DEC officials and state representatives expressing similar sentiment, saying the town board would accept the DEC's permitting regulations when and if they are completed. "We feel that the permitting process should be left up to the individual property owner whether they want drilling or not," stated the July 13 letter.

Cook said his board chose not to sign any resolutions for or against any type of drilling, and made the decision to write the letter earlier in the week.

About 25 speakers took the podium to address the Coventry Town Board during the public comment session.

The drilling sentiment was equally divided between both sides of the issue. Supervisor George Westcott first permitted town residents and taxpayers to speak for three minutes each, followed by non-residents for a total of 20 minutes before considering the resolution.

Drilling opponent Jeff Fritz's statements echoed those of the opposition when he lauded the value of clean water and deplored its potential contamination.

"They're not letting them drill around New York City's water supply, what about the Chesapeake Bay where our water ends up? The whole process makes me nervous." Resident Kim Michaels said zoning ordinances wouldn't be enough to handle the heavy construction brought by the industry. "The costs will be enormous," she said.

Westcott said he had received between 40 and 50 emails since the special meeting was called, many of which protested the date of the upcoming meeting.

Westcott said he followed open meetings law by posting notice on the Internet and at the town hall 10

days prior.

Richard Warner, a dairy farmer, said Coventry's businesses as well as individuals would benefit from the industry. "There isn't any other industry coming in.

The Coventry Store and trailer park will all benefit," he said. Local contractor Don Houle said he had installed compressor stations in Dimock, Pa. where dilling has been ongoing. "It needs to happen here. It needs to happen," he said.

Thousands of wells have been drilled in Pennsylvania since the Marcellus Shale gas boom began about five years ago, but New York hasn't allowed horizontal drilling and high-volume hydraulic fracturing to proceed since potential water contamination became a concern in 2008.

New York counties along the Pennsylvania border are considered the "sweet spot" of the shale gas boom should it begin in the state.

George Broeg made the motion to adopt the resolution, Marion Ireland seconded it. Councilman Doug Besemer voted no.

Cook said his town residents had been "relatively quiet" on the subject. He said his town board had entertained speakers on all sides of the issue.

Exhibit is about effects of gas drilling

Reading Eagle (PA) - Monday, July 23, 2012

Author: Ron Devlin, Reading Eagle, Pa.

July 23--One wall of the Independent Space Gallery in Kutztown is adorned with images of the cascading waterfalls in Glen Onoko in Carbon County and other pristine images of Pennsylvania's natural beauty.

The opposite wall has photos of dried-up streams, deforested areas and heavy equipment at natural gas drilling sites in mountainous areas of northern Pennsylvania.

The contrasting themes are freelance journalist Michael Shaw's way of expressing concern for the future of Pennsylvania's wilderness.

"Pennsylvania has some of the most beautiful backcountry in the world," said Shaw, 57, of Kutztown. "My fear is that, due to the environmental effects of fracking , that beauty will be scarred with uninhabitable 'dead zones' in the future."

The exhibit, "Save Penn's Woods," will be at the Kutztown gallery through the first week in September.

Shaw said he doesn't consider himself a hard-core environmentalist. He'd rather be photographing waterfalls and rock formations, but feels compelled to document what he believes is an environmental threat posed by the influx of companies drilling for natural gas.

"This is what I need to do," said Shaw, pointing to the nature photographs.

Gas drilling has been a controversial topic in Pennsylvania. State lawmakers hope a law passed this year will ease the environmental impact.

The law includes a new impact fee on gas drillers, stronger environmental protections and online public disclosure of chemicals used in fracking , the process by which natural gas is extracted from deposits of Marcellus shale deep below Pennsylvania's mountains.

Shaw, a former staffer at Rodale Institute's Backpacker and Bicycling magazines, also taught creative writing in the now-defunct Upward Bound program at Kutztown University.

He's currently doing research on a book about fracking .

His love for nature, Shaw said, began as a Boy Scout in Drexel Hill, Delaware County.

"We were in the woods every month except December," he recalled. "That experience with nature changed my life. It defined who I was."

His scoutmaster, Shaw said, had one hard-and-fast rule that Shaw continues to live by: "You leave the wilderness in better shape than you found it."

"When they show up with bulldozers and land movers, they change the wilderness," he said.

Shaw's photos were taken during frequent trips to counties where drilling has become increasingly common.

Shaw is a member of Berks Gas Truth, a Kutztown-based group that opposes fracking . He insists the exhibit is not connected to the group.

"This is really about our children," he said. "It's about what kind of world we want to pass on to them."

Contact Ron Devlin: 610-371-5030 or rdevlin@readingeagle.com.

Memo: --- (c)2012 Reading Eagle (Reading, Pa.)

YOUR OPINION - HYDRAULIC FRACTURING UPSTATE - COULD AFFECT OUR WATER SUPPLY

Staten Island Advance (NY) - Monday, July 23, 2012

State Sen. Dean Skelos, who is the Republican leader in the state Senate, and his deputy, state Sen. Tom Libous, are big supporters of hydraulic fracturing in upstate New York.

Hydraulic fracturing is the drilling process that uses millions of gallons of water and cancer-causing chemicals to release natural gas. It will be the millions of gallons of contaminated wastewater that will concern the millions of New York City residents who receive their drinking water from upstate New York.

Senators Skelos and Libous, who do not represent constituents who get their drinking water from the New York City watershed, argue that hydraulic fracturing will provide jobs but never tell you that the jobs will go to people from out of state and that these jobs are only temporary.

If our drinking water is contaminated by hydraulic fracturing wastewater, the City's Department of Environmental Protection will have to build a very expensive treatment plant. Whether a treatment plant can remove the cancer-causing chemicals and radioactive radon is not known.

What is known is that the cost of building and operating a treatment plant will be added to our water bill.

JEFFREY STONEHILL

SUNNYSIDE

RACISM IS JUST BELOW THE SURFACE

OF OPPOSITION TO OBAMA

Republican/Tea Party reactionaries continue to make their appeal to racist segments of the community.

The use of obscene "dog-whistle" language is aimed directly at white ethnic voters here on Staten Island and across the country. Most recently, right-wing opponents of the Affordable Care Act have warned that it will "turn the American health care system into a ghetto."

Extremist elements within the Republican/Tea Party have likened the official residence of the president to

"public housing" and have suggested that President Barack Obama lacks the proper reverence to live in the White House.

Of course, there have been countless derogatory references to President Obama as the "food-stamp president."

The absurd "birther" movement continues unabated and allusions to the president being pompous ("uppity") are always close to the surface.

The Republican/Tea Partisans have got to stop this racist claptrap and begin to make a meaningful contribution toward getting unemployed Americans back to work.

They should also be required to give some logical explanation why every citizen in this country shouldn't have a basic human right to quality, affordable health care and they should be prepared to explain and defend why their prospective nominee for president of the United States has a Swiss bank account.

JEREMIAH O'LEARY Jr.

WEST BRIGHTON

ARAB LEADERS INVENTED JEWISH

'CRIMES' TO INFLAME THEIR PEOPLE

In response to Barbara Walker's July 11 letter:

You mentioned the "massacre" of Deir Yassin. You claim Jews murdered Arab women and children.

In reality, the Arab leaders made up stories about rapes and massacres which were supposedly committed by Jews in an effort to anger the Arabs and encourage them to kill Jews living in Israel.

Instead of instilling hate and anger in the hearts of the Arabs, they instilled fear and many Arabs fled their homes.

Abu Mahmud, a Deir Yassin resident in 1948, told the BBC that residents had been told by Arab officials to say that there was a massacre and rape "so the Arab armies will come to liberate Palestine from the Jews."

The mandate of Palestine consisted of present day Jordan, Israel, Judea and Samaria and Gaza. 80 percent of the mandate was given to the Arabs which is present-day Jordan. The remaining 20 percent was split between Jews and Arabs.

You have the nerve to say the Palestinians lost their homeland? They were given 87 percent of the land, even though the Jews made up one third of the mandate population in 1947.

All of this information and more can be found at <http://www.standwithus.com/booklets/IL101/>

SCOTT KALMIKOFF GRANT CITY

Gardner: BLM and Salazar Gave Some Explaining To Do

Targeted News Service (USA) - Monday, July 23, 2012

WASHINGTON, July 23 -- Rep. Cory Gardner, R-Colo. (4th CD), issued the following news release:

Congressman Cory Gardner (R-CO) is questioning the extent to which the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is considering the feedback of oil and gas producing states in its attempt to create federal regulations for hydraulic fracturing . While the BLM claims to have sought feedback from a wide range of sources, including state governments, Gardner's office has been told a different story.

"We have heard from several interested parties that BLM did not listen to the feedback from oil and gas producing states," Gardner wrote in a letter to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, whose department ultimately has authority over the BLM.

In Gardner's letter, he asks Salazar to provide more details on which oil and gas producing states were consulted and how the feedback those states provided shaped the proposed regulations for hydraulic fracturing. Gardner also calls BLM's cost benefit analysis into question, given that its numbers vary significantly from a more in-depth study done by Western Energy Alliance.

The letter was signed by 63 members, including 2 Democrats.

To download a copy of the letter, click [HERE](http://gardner.house.gov/sites/gardner.house.gov/files/Final%20Gardner%20HF%20Letter%20to%20Salazar.pdf) (<http://gardner.house.gov/sites/gardner.house.gov/files/Final%20Gardner%20HF%20Letter%20to%20Salazar.pdf>).

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Fracking law includes layers of protections

Greensboro News & Record (NC) - Sunday, July 22, 2012

Author: RUTH SAMUELSON

Two big misconceptions persist regarding the bill adopted recently by the state legislature that legalized hydraulic fracturing - also known as fracking - as a means of extracting natural gas in North Carolina.

The first is that it only became law because the Republicans unfairly would not allow Rep. Becky Carney to change the vote she mistakenly cast in favor of overriding the governor's veto of the bill. The truth is that House rules do not allow members to change their votes when doing so would change the outcome of the overall vote, as it would have in this case.

The controversy over Rep. Carney's error unfortunately overshadowed the fact that the bill actually had broad bipartisan support, including from both the Republican and Democratic candidates for governor. If it hadn't passed during this session, some form of fracking bill would likely have passed in the next.

And, it's quite possible that it would not have included the multiple public protections included in this bill.

That brings me to the second misconception I want to address: that fracking is imminent or even inevitable in North Carolina.

The new law calls for the creation of a 15-member Mining and Energy Commission to develop regulations governing hydraulic fracturing in our state, particularly with an eye toward addressing potential groundwater contamination issues associated with the fracking method.

The law sets a deadline of October 2014 for the commission to have regulations in place, and it specifically states that no permits will be issued until and unless the General Assembly takes additional legislative action to allow it. If we decide that fracking should be permitted in North Carolina, we may not see the first permits issued until 2015. What happens between now and then is critical.

House and Senate appointments to the commission have been set, but, as of this writing, the governor had not announced her four appointments. Its first quarterly report to two legislative oversight commissions, including the Environmental Review Commission, is due no later than Jan. 1.

As co-chairwoman of the Environmental Review Commission, I will be following these reports closely, and I won't hesitate to ask for additional written and oral reports as necessary.

The Mining and Energy Commission should take to heart the law's requirement that it include input from scientific and technical advisory groups, fair-minded industry and environmental advocacy groups and city

and county government representatives.

It should seek broad public participation during its public meetings, which will be held at least twice quarterly. It should go to great lengths to make any information it receives readily available to the public, perhaps through a dedicated website.

In short, the Mining and Energy Commission should do everything within its power to ensure that this is a process of unprecedented openness and transparency.

If it does not, the people of North Carolina will not have confidence that the regulations the commission establishes adequately protect our precious drinking water resources. Until and unless that confidence exists, I will not advocate the permitting of the first hydraulically fractured well site in North Carolina.

About that, there should be no misconceptions.

Ruth Samuelson represents Mecklenburg County's District 104 in the state House, where she also serves as majority whip, co-chairwoman of the Environment Committee and co-chairwoman of the Environmental Review Commission.

Drilling activists draw a hard line - Supporters, opponents in heated public relations battle

Repository, The (Canton, OH) - Sunday, July 22, 2012

Author: Edd Pritchard, edd.pritchard@cantonrep.com

As folks with Energy In Depth tell it, they had been seeking an opportunity to promote efforts to develop the Utica shale lying under eastern Ohio.

When the organization learned that "Don't Frack Ohio" planned a four-day seminar and rally in Columbus promoting efforts to ban drilling shale formations in Ohio, Energy In Depth planned its own event. It seemed like a good way to contrast the "for-profit activists" coming from out of state, said Daniel Alfaro, communications director for Energy In Depth Ohio.

'TRUTHLAND' So on June 15, Energy In Depth and other groups met at the Center of Science and Industry to watch a film called "Truthland."

The 35-minute film - which was shown Thursday at Kent State University Stark - was created by the drilling industry in response to "Gasland," a 2010 film that attacked drilling.

After three days of training and sessions about natural gas drilling, "Don't Frack Ohio" capped its seminars with a rally that featured a speech by Josh Fox, director of "Gasland," a film that blames drilling for water pollution and health problems around the country.

The dueling events - conducted Father's Day weekend - were a skirmish in the public-relations battle over the growing shale drilling business in Ohio.

Companies and industry groups try to rally support by talking about jobs and economic development. Opponents often are aligned with health or environmental groups and argue that drilling increases air pollution and threatens water supplies.

The topic can be polarizing.

Common ground between the two sides doesn't seem to exist.

HISTORY OF DRILLING Oil and natural gas drilling has been part of Ohio's economy for more than 150 years.

The Ohio Oil and Gas Energy Education Program - an offshoot of the Ohio Oil and Gas Association - points out that Ohio ranks fourth in the nation with more than 273,000 wells.

Interest has grown in Ohio's oil and gas fields as companies are recognizing the Utica shale 6,500 feet below the surface is rich in oil and liquid natural gas. During the past 10 years in other parts of the country, companies have used horizontal drilling to reach shale and hydraulic fracturing to break the rock and release hydrocarbons.

The push by companies has been followed by industry groups promoting the development.

Energy In Depth was created in 2009 by the Independent Petroleum Association of America as "a research, education and public outreach campaign." More recently the American Petroleum Institute has created Energy Citizens to identify and mobilize supporters.

Drilling opponents cite a grassroots effort.

Many met at public meetings.

Some have come together through websites. One group, T.A.S.K. Take Action Spread Knowledge, was organized by Kent State University Stark students.

' FRACKING ' BUZZ The hydraulic fracturing process - called " fracking " - initially caught the ire of drilling opponents.

The process involves flushing up to 5 million gallons - more for some wells - of water mixed with sand and chemicals into a well. Pressure fractures the rock, the water pushes through the cracks, and sand particles keep the cracks open. Gas and oil then escapes.

" Fracking " became a buzz word for industry opponents.

But these days Darla Bruno - a Jackson Township resident and computer programmer analyst - has grown tired of the word. Fracking is tossed around because it's short and catchy, she said. But she believes the oil and gas industry play semantics with the word.

Oil and gas drilling opponents question the entire process, not just fracking , Bruno said. Problems can occur any time during drilling, she said.

Many of Bruno's evenings are spent at public meetings where drilling is the topic.

She wants to be certain the speakers are honest, cover all of the angles and don't say things that aren't true. There are too many people who "only paint a rosy picture," she said.

'JOBS, JOBS, JOBS' Drilling supporters don't hide their enthusiasm. It can fix unemployment and underemployment problems, said Scott Bailey, a Canton resident and businessman who has tapped into Energy Citizen Ohio.

Job projections are high for the Utica and aren't limited to drilling wells and gathering products. Supporters argue manufacturing jobs are created to supply equipment to the industry. Service jobs and small businesses will grow because of the industry.

"That's awesome," Bailey said of long-term job possibilities.

"God's blessed us with abundant resources, and we should use them."

Lower costs for natural gas and oil will be another benefit.

That means reduced heating bills for homes and lower prices at the pumps, supporters said.

"If you can drill and find it closer to home, you're crazy not to," said Dennis Rood, a Plain Township

resident and retired sheriff's deputy. "Why should we be paying other countries for oil if we've got it here?"

DISTRUST OF INDUSTRY Bruno said she became interested in drilling after watching "Gasland." She began doing research. "The more I read, the more disturbed I became by what I read."

Dan Lincoln, a Pike Township resident, also saw "Gasland" and followed with research.

"I was shocked," he said.

Lincoln moved his family to Stark County from Massachusetts.

He loves Ohio, the outdoors and hunting. He dislikes being labeled an environmentalist because of his worries about possible contamination from drilling and efforts to protect the home he and his wife built for their children.

"Everywhere this industry goes, there are contamination events," Lincoln said. He cites reports about lawsuits that end with out-of-court settlements and gag orders telling people not to talk.

Lincoln realizes the need for gas and oil. He knows some people want to lease their mineral rights, and said he respects their right to lease.

But he believes the oil industry ignores the rights of people opposed to drilling.

There needs to be some controls, he said. "You can't let a business run rampant and take away the rights of others."

DRILL NOW OR WAIT?

Bruno, Lincoln and other opponents argue that more science is needed before there is more horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing.

They are part of groups that have urged a moratorium on drilling in Ohio. But with nearly 300 shale well permits - 281 for the Utica and 16 for the Marcellus - issued by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and more than 90 wells drilled, a moratorium seems unlikely.

Supporters counter that delays aren't necessary. They cite the years of drilling in Ohio, and add that fracking has been an industry practice since the 1950s.

While opponents express distrust for the industry, supporters say they believe companies are doing their best to protect their investments.

"For the microscopic attention these drillers are getting, they better be careful, and I think they are," said Bill McPherson, a retired banker who lives in Plain Township.

"They've been fracking forever and nobody said a word."

Bailey believes Americans are more conscious of keeping the environment clean, and that drilling companies have a goal of keeping the environment safe.

"I think everything has a calculated risk," Bailey said, adding that companies are in business "to make money, and they are going to do it right."

ARGUING OVER SAFETY The debate over environmental safety has carved the chasm that separates the sides.

Opponents cite incidents that have occurred around the country, including claims that methane and

chemicals have leaked into water wells.

Problems aren't limited to drilling, opponents contend.

Trucks hauling water and oil cause air pollution. Compressor stations where gas is processed can have problems.

Underground injection wells have been tied to minor earthquakes, similar to quakes recorded in Youngstown during 2011.

Plain Township resident Sue Garver learned about drilling by routinely attending township trustees meetings.

A retired teacher, she listened and then began doing her own research.

"The information I'm getting is different from what I'm seeing in the advertising," Garver said. "I see an industry not taking responsibility for any of the events that have occurred."

The information is packaged into slick advertising about cheap energy that leaves us with clean air and water.

"Sometimes I think we're all so busy that we'd rather believe the advertisements than listen to our guts," she said.

NO LOCAL CONTROL Opponents also question politicians and their support for the industry. The biggest concern voiced by many centers on state laws that block local governments from stopping wells.

"Why have zoning laws for everything in the world, but not for oil and gas?" Lincoln asked.

Plain Township retiree Tony Paone said he first heard about drilling when Chesapeake Energy sent a letter offering to test his well water.

He called Plain trustees and learned that his local elected officials had no power to stop drilling.

"Why are corporate interests exceeding community rights?" Paone asked. "Nobody is listening to us. I want to make sure we do this right."

Paone is worried drilling could affect his water well and his property. If his water well is contaminated by methane or another chemical, would his property become worthless?

"Your lifetime work has been poured into your home, your property, and now you have a problem that you didn't create," Paone said.

Drilling supporters are quick to point out that nature sometimes allows gas and oil to migrate into water wells. That is one reason Ohio laws require water testing by companies before they drill a well.

Supporters also note that wells are lined with layers of steel and concrete casings to protect the water table. Ohio has some of the nation's toughest regulations, industry groups contend.

But Bruno counters wear and tear causes concrete and steel casings to deteriorate.

Eventually the wells can leak.

And what about the minor earthquakes, she asks? Can the shaking cause pipelines to break? "What damage is being done underground that we don't know about?"

Memo: "If you can drill and find it closer to home, you're crazy not to."

Why should we be paying other countries for oil if we've got it here?"

DENNIS ROOD, A PLAIN TOWNSHIP RESIDENT AND RETIRED SHERIFF's DEPUTY

Minnesota landowners cashing in on 'frac sand'

Finance & Commerce (Minneapolis, MN) - Tuesday, July 17, 2012

Author: Dan Haugen

A little over a year ago, Jim Tittle was stunned to learn that a piece of land down the road from a family property near Red Wing had recently sold for \$1.5 million.

"I know what my land is supposed to be worth," Tittle said. "I looked at that and thought: Oh my god, what's going on here?"

Even record-high farmland values didn't explain why someone would pay that much for the parcel as well as another \$1.1 million for a plot across Highway 58. "Somebody was valuing that land for something besides farming," Tittle concluded.

With a little sleuthing Tittle, a St. Paul filmmaker, learned the land was bought by a company that hopes to mine it for fine silica sand, a commodity whose value has surged because of demand from oil and gas drilling operations.

The particular type of sand, which is common in the bluffs along the Minnesota-Wisconsin border, has come to be known as "frac sand" because of its use in hydraulic fracturing, a drilling practice in which water, chemicals and sand are blasted underground to loosen oil and gas deposits.

Wisconsin has already seen an explosion of new mining activity, and Minnesota is in line for a piece of the sand rush, too – if local governments decide to allow it. Many cities and counties have passed moratoriums on new sand mines while they evaluate the potential risks and benefits.

Since 2004, demand for frac sand has been growing at a 28 percent annual clip, according to U.S. Silica Holdings, the nation's second-largest silica producer. Prices have risen about 9 percent annually to more than \$30 per ton.

Sand mining has potential to bring jobs and tax revenue to Minnesota communities, as well as a handful of big paychecks for property owners, like Tittle's neighbors, who are sitting on the right piece of geology.

It also means increased truck traffic, spoiled views and possible health impacts. The sand is much finer than the stuff in playground sandboxes, which means it can be easily inhaled. Workers who breathe the dust may be at risk for lung cancer and silicosis, in which scar tissue forms in the lungs, reducing their ability to absorb oxygen. Little is known, however, about the risks of broader exposure to silica dust.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is trying to determine whether the existing rules for sand and gravel mining are sufficient for frac sand.

Filmore, Goodhue, Houston, Wabasha and Winona counties have all passed moratoriums on new facilities. There are six existing silica sand mines in the state, all of which predate the recent frac sand boom, which so far has been muted in Minnesota because of the restrictions.

It hasn't been invisible, though.

Winona saw a "noticeable" increase in dust and truck traffic last year, said Assistant City Planner Carlos Espinosa. Frac sand is mined in Wisconsin and hauled across the border for processing and shipping. The city estimates the activity has created more than 50 jobs with average annual wages exceeding \$50,000, Espinosa said. Still, the city adopted a moratorium on new sand operations until March.

Winona County Assessor Stephen Hacken said he hasn't seen any land sales that appear to be related to

frac sand. Goodhue County Assessor Peggy Trebil said she's aware of only three related parcels, which include the piece of land south of Tittle's family property.

Tittle's curiosity led him to begin filming a documentary called "The Price of Sand." He has interviewed Wisconsin residents about how frac sand mining is affecting them. One of the more concerning themes is the rift it creates when one family gets rich at the expense of their neighbor's peaceful view.

"The money is causing big divisions in towns," Tittle said. "It's like a soap opera."

John Kronebusch, a Winona Realtor with Property Brokers of Minnesota, said he knows a few people who are trying to sell their homes now rather than risk having to sell later when a frac sand mine is next door.

Overall, though, he suspects the actual impact on land values will be confined to a handful of properties, with a few winners, a few losers, and a lot of jealousy.

"A lot of people don't like the guy who wins the lottery," Kronebusch said. But for the farmer who has the right piece of land? "It's gonna be a heck of a lot better than corn and beans and raising cows, if this goes through."

SHIPPED OUT - Displaced families at center of fracking protests

Allegheny Times (Coraopolis, PA) - Thursday, July 12, 2012

Author: TARA ZRINSKI SHALEREPORTER.COM

JERSEY SHORE, PA. - At 7 a.m. June 13, the day after police escorted 35 activists from the Riverdale Mobile Home Village, the demolition company Alan K. Meyers went to work clearing the colorful barricades, abandoned trailers and all traces of a two-week protest that brought national attention to the plight of dozens of families being displaced by an aggressive natural gas industry.

As a result of the protest, Aqua America, which had bought the mobile home park along the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania's Lycoming County, allowed six families to remain an additional month while they made arrangements to move.

"We felt for the people, so we did what we thought was the right thing to ease the transition while they were moving out," said Donna Alston, communications manager for Aqua America, which is converting the 12-acre trailer park to a water shipment facility to supply water for the controversial natural gas drilling procedure called fracking. "It became clear that the former owner (Richard "Skip" Leonard) had given them inadequate time to relocate." Residents had received a letter of immediate termination of their leases from Leonard on Feb. 23, the day Leonard sold the land to Aqua America. They were given incentives of \$2,500 to move by June 1. Most did, but they were replaced by protesters from across the country, who camped out at the park until a settlement was reached with the other half-dozen families.

"The remaining residents engaged North Penn Legal Services, and we reached an amicable solution, the details of which cannot be disclosed," Alston said Monday. "No one has been evicted." But as of today, everyone has to be out.

A former resident who left before June 1 said the six families received \$12,500 each in their settlements, significantly more than the \$2,500 incentive provided to the 32 other families that left prior to the activists' 12-day occupation of Riverdale. Considering the cost of moving a trailer is about \$8,000 to \$12,000, this larger amount would cover the expense of moving a home, time off from work and rental fees, said the resident, who did not want to be identified.

But Wendy Lynne Lee, a professor at Bloomsburg University who participated in the protest, said the six families could fare worse in the long run.

Those families might have been exposed to asbestos while the trailer park was demolished around them.

"If the agreement the residents are being pressured to sign includes a nondisclosure clause that

stipulates the residents can never sue ... on any grounds, then the residents could not sue on the grounds they were exposed to asbestos," said Lee. Exposure to asbestos is a health risk, the potential dangers of which are not visible for several years after exposure but include respiratory problems, mesothelioma and lung cancer. Lee said she alerted the Williamsport Office of the Department of Environmental Protection in June about the potential threat of improper asbestos demolition.

"When I spoke to ... the DEP agent at the Williamsport DEP office for air-quality control, he did not know that there were any people still living in the park when the demolitions began," Lee said Monday.

Lee claims that proper asbestos investigations of abandoned trailers never occurred and that the demolition had been going on for more than two weeks while residents cleared their trailers, packed their possessions and made new living arrangements.

In an email Monday reporting on her communications with the DEP, Lee wrote, "I have been informed that Alan K. Meyers - one of the subcontracting demolition companies - has been directed to 'corrective action'; that is, to suspend further demolitions until the park has been completely vacated." " (The DEP) doesn't issue anything called corrective action," Dan Spadoni, community relations coordinator with the North Central Regional Office of the DEP, said Monday. "That is not in our realm of responsibility. We don't regulate the demolition of those trailers." But on Tuesday, Spadoni confirmed that the DEP had received a report from a concerned citizen on June 21 "regarding issues related to asbestos abatement and demolition in the Riverdale Mobile Home Park." The matter, he said, is still under investigation, and no enforcement has been taken. Spadoni said the investigation might conclude by the end of July, but he declined to speculate on potential fines if proper asbestos demolition procedures were not followed. According to the federal Clean Air Act, potential fines could cost Aqua America thousands of dollars for each day of violations if the investigation shows the demolition did not follow proper asbestos removal procedures.

Caption: Shale Reporter, a Calkins Media production, is an independent website that provides an unbiased presentation of information about Marcellus shale issues.

Memo: For a story on fluids from Marcellus shale drilling seeping into drinking water in Pennsylvania, visit <http://www.propublica.org/article/newstudy-fluids-from-marcellusshale-likely-seeping-into-padrinking-water> A story in Wednesday's Times gave an incorrect link that took readers to a previous story.

Can fracking pollute water ?

Allegheny Times (Coraopolis, PA) - Thursday, July 12, 2012

We know that the Pirates' surprising summer success and our recent hotter-than-average temperatures may not be the only reasons leaving you to scratch your head lately.

Emerging stories regarding the link between shale gas drilling and water containment have been filled with somewhat confusing information.

First, there was no connection between the drilling and the water, then the viewpoint swapped sides.

And just when you thought you were already on information overload, yet another study led by the Department of Energy plans to give us more concrete responses regarding the possible damage of H2O supplies.

The new study may provide some of the first solid answers to a controversial question: Can gas drilling fluids migrate and pose a threat to drinking water? A drilling company in southwestern Pennsylvania is giving researchers access to a commercial drilling site, said Richard Hammack, a spokesman for the National Energy Technology Laboratory in Pittsburgh.

The firm let scientists conduct baseline tests, allowed tracing elements to be added to hydraulic fracturing fluids and agreed to allow follow-up monitoring. That should let scientists see whether the drilling fluids move upwards or sideways from the Marcellus Shale, which is 8, 100 feet deep at that spot.

"It's like the perfect laboratory," Hammack said.

Hammack said he believes this is the first time such research has been done on a commercial gas well.

"Conceptually, it sounds like a really great idea," said P. Lee Ferguson, a Duke University civil and environmental engineering professor who is not involved with the project. "I have wondered about this since I started thinking about fracking. Which compounds are mobile and which aren't?" The gas is pulled from the ground through a process called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, in which large volumes of water, plus sand and chemicals, are injected deep underground to break shale apart and free the gas.

Environmentalists have claimed the fluids associated with drilling could rise and pollute shallow drinking water aquifers. The industry and many government officials say the practice is safe when done properly, but there have also been cases where faulty wells did cause pollution.

Ferguson cautioned that no single study will answer all questions about fracking and the potential for pollution.

-The Associated Press.

FRACTURED LIVES - Marcellus shale operations lead to evictions along the Susquehanna River

Allegheny Times (Coraopolis, PA) - Wednesday, July 11, 2012

Author: HALLE STOCKTON, PUBLICSOURCE

JERSEY SHORE, PA. On hot days, twins Amanda and Chevelle Eck splashed in the Susquehanna River behind their trailer in the Riverdale Mobile Home Park.

Anytime their mother, Deb, worked late at her discount-store job, neighbors would meet the girls at the school bus stop and treat them to popsicles.

In less than five months, that community has disappeared as residents were evicted from the park, forcing some to surrender their mobile homes.

"Basically, part of my family has been ripped away," Eck said in early June. "And I'm not giving up my home, too. I bought that thing with sweat and I earned every damn penny I've put into that place. I just don't happen to own the ground it sits on." Deb Eck and her 10-year-old twins left Riverdale on July 7, towing their trailer to another mobile-home park.

In late February, Aqua America and Penn Virginia Resource Partners became the owners of the 12 acres Riverdale sits on. The partnership will use the parcel in a \$50 million plan to build a water-pumping station and 36-mile pipeline with the capacity to carry millions of gallons of water daily from the Susquehanna to natural gas wells.

This small park of 32 trailers, home to an oft-ignored and marginalized population, has become yet another flash point in the national debate over the impact of natural gas drilling and the industry's methods.

Some say it is the first example of outright evictions because of Marcellus shale operations in the drilling hotbed of Pennsylvania, New York and West Virginia.

No one asked. The Riverdale trailer park provided affordable homes to a cluster of working-poor families and the elderly of Jersey Shore, a borough of 4,300 people between Lock Haven and Williamsport.

Most residents owned their mobile homes and paid \$200 a month to lease the land.

They learned of the project that would eviscerate their community when a story ran in the local newspaper in February. The majority had neither the desire nor the means to leave. No one bothered to ask them, they said.

The Lycoming County Planning Commission approved site plans to build a pump station on the Riverdale land on Feb. 16.

The park land owners, Richard and Joanne Leonard, sold it to the partnership for \$550, 000 on Feb. 23, according to Lycoming County assessment records. The land was last valued by the county assessment office at \$439, 890.

The trailer-park's manager recently waved off a reporter asking for comment. Shortly after the land sale, residents received eviction notices.

Aqua America initially offered residents a \$2, 500 incentive if they moved by April 1. The deal dropped to \$1, 500 if they packed up by May 1. Donna Alston, Aqua America's spokeswoman, said company officials changed their tactics when they realized the Riverdale tenants were not given adequate notice.

"As things became clear to us, because at first it wasn't clear people would face hardship, we extended the period of time to move and we did not collect rent or water and sewer fees," she said.

The company hired a realtor to assist in the relocations and offered \$2, 500 to all who moved by June 1, the construction start date.

"None of that was required," Alston said. "The things we did were out of concern, out of compassion and out of understanding." Riverdale residents said rents were higher at other mobile-home parks, and quotes they obtained showed it cost \$5, 000 to \$10, 000 to move a trailer.

But fears about money, arrest and even homelessness picked off residents one by one until nine adults and four children remained after the June 1 deadline. Some of them were unable to move, while others simply refused.

The ones who left dispersed to other trailer courts, senior housing or extra rooms in the homes of family and friends. The lucky ones were able to move their trailers; many were forced to abandon their homes. At least one family wiped out their retirement savings to make the move.

Many trailers dated back to the 1970s and could not be moved without crumbling.

Some were too heavy or would not be accepted elsewhere.

Eck, 50, had trouble finding a court that would take her 76-foot long trailer with metal casing. "It's not aesthetically pleasing, I suppose," she said. The few trailer parks that would accept her home weren't acceptable to her.

"I did a search on the Megan's Law website and I'm not moving there with my girls," she said, "It's not safe." The website she referred to makes addresses of registered sex offenders available to the public. Eck said she also had to consider school districts for her daughters.

Several residents came back to gut their deserted homes for scrap. They stripped siding down to the fiberglass and removed appliances, carpeting and windows. The home of an elderly couple collapsed in the process. Debris littered the park.

Eric and April Daniels bought their trailer three years ago for \$5, 000. They spent \$7, 000 to transform it into a well-insulated home with new appliances and fixtures to raise Eric's 14-year-old daughter, Alexa, and the couple's 4-year-old, Jeanna.

It took four days to tear the trailer apart.

They signed over the trailer's title to the company for \$2, 500. It would have cost \$7, 300 to move the trailer.

Now, they pay \$325 more per month to rent a trailer in another court. They've since canceled family life insurance that cost \$193 a month and they're behind on other payments.

Eric Daniels, 43, had counted himself lucky a year and a half ago when he got a \$17-an-hour job driving a truck that hauls water to natural gas wells. His view is shifting now that his home is gone and the pipeline threatens his job. More than 2, 000 water truck trips had already been eliminated by the pipeline by late April, the company reported.

"This is not the way you do business," he said. "Now I feel like an absolute refugee." A eulogy and a revival A local pastor led a vigil at Riverdale on May 31.

It was the community's eulogy. But it was also a revival, albeit temporary, because the calls to save the mobile-home park had ballooned into a protest that united its blue-collar residents with people more accustomed to defying the establishment.

Activists came from various states where drilling is taking place, and Riverdale became an intersection of causes.

"This is where environment meets social justice," said Wendy Lynne Lee, a Bloomsburg University philosophy professor who joined other activists at a 12-day Riverdale encampment that was part of a broader "Occupy Well Street" movement.

They barricaded the park's access roads with signs carrying messages such as, "They sold us down the river," which prompted many Route 220 motorists and truckers to blow their horns in agreement.

The goal was to help the residents defend the space.

The bulldozers, scheduled to come on June 1, were a no-show.

The residents and the activists shared meals, cleaned up the park and chatted by campfires.

Private security guards, bolstered by 20 state police officers, showed up June 12 to shoo away the activists. There were no arrests or violence.

Lee said the situation would add fuel to the anti- fracking movement in Pennsylvania. "The end here is a beginning." It was also a beginning for construction of the pump station, which started the day activists left the property.

For the few residents who still live there, floodlights glare through the night on an active construction site that is surrounded by industrial fencing.

"It is not a home anymore, I can tell you that much," Eck said.

Quality as well as quantity Three million gallons of water a day sounds like an enormous amount to take from the Susquehanna River - or any natural waterway.

But the Susquehanna withdrawals planned by Aqua America and Penn Virginia Resource Partners are only a fraction of water removed from all Pennsylvania water sources.

Read more.

The partnership has completed 18 miles of pipeline that was carrying water, purchased from the Jersey Shore Water Authority, to drill sites by late April.

The Philadelphia-area companies plan to extend the pipeline another 18 miles to provide water to more natural gas producers.

Water is the primary ingredient of the slurry - including sand and chemical additives - that is injected into the rock to extend fractures and access the natural gas in Marcellus shale formations.

The pump station on the Susquehanna will provide area natural gas wells with up to 3 million gallons of water per day - a water volume equivalent to nearly five Olympic-size swimming pools.

The withdrawal amount was approved by the Susquehanna River Basin Commission in March and is effective for 15 years.

The state Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission also reviewed the project, according to commission's documents.

Loss of a home What is the value of a home? In late June, Chesapeake Energy settled with three families in Northeastern Pennsylvania for \$1.6 million after the families sued, saying they had to move because gas drilling contaminated their wells, according to the Associated Press.

Eric Daniels gazed at his deconstructed trailer as he thought about the worth of his former Riverdale home.

"It's not a mansion or a log cabin," he said. "We loved it. The value of a home is in the people, not the dollars." The Riverdale holdouts eventually struck a deal with the partnership that meant more money and more time, though residents had to keep the terms confidential.

Their deadline to leave is July 12.

The residents who took the company's initial offer of \$2, 500 have grumbled, and there has been talk of a civil lawsuit, but most are weary and want to move on.

Even with the better offer, resident Denise Bliler said there would still be hardship. She had checked with four other mobilehome parks that would not take her trailer because of its roof and siding materials.

"They won't accept me, so, no matter what, they're taking my home from me," she said.

Reach Halle Stockton at (412) 315-0263 or hstockton@publicsource.org.

Caption: Residents of Riverdale Mobile Home Park along the Susquehanna River have been forced out by Marcellus shale drilling. PublicSource photo. ABOVE: Activist Wendy Lynne Lee takes the protest to Route 220, in front of the Riverdale Park, where much of the passing truck traffic is related to natural gas well development. ON THE COVER: Deb Eck, a Riverdale Mobile Home Park resident who resisted eviction, sits with her daughter Chevelle on the porch of a vacant trailer. She was talking with activists who tried to help residents save their mobile homes. PublicSource photos by Lynn Johnson.

Memo: PublicSource is an independent, nonprofit news group that focuses on original investigative reporting about critical issues facing Pittsburgh and the western Pennsylvania region

Light the faucets on fire

Allegheny Times (Coraopolis, PA) - Wednesday, July 11, 2012

A study conducted by scientists at Duke University has linked natural gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing with a pattern of water contamination so severe that faucets can be lighted on fire.

The study, portions of which were reported in Tuesday's Times in a story by The Associated Press, was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The findings promise to shape the contentious debate over whether the Marcellus shale gas drilling industry poses long-term threats to drinking water.

The latest details were published this week by ProPublica, an independent, nonprofit newsroom based in New York City that produces investigative journalism in the public interest. For the full report, go to: <http://www.propublica.org/article/scientific-study-links-flammable-drinking-water-to-fracking>.

Caption: Photo by Keith Srakocic of The AP Kimberlie McEvoy collects some of her well water as it comes from her kitchen sink on Feb. 23 at her home in Evans City, Pa.

20 million acre oil and gas lease sale offshore Texas announced

Penn Energy 07/23/2012

http://www.pennenergy.com/index/petroleum/display/8516508251/articles/pennenergy/petroleum/offshore/2012/july/20-million_ace_oil.html?cmpid=EnlDailyPetroJuly242012

The Obama Administration has announced a 20 million acre oil and gas lease sale offshore Texas coming this November.

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"Strive not to be a success but rather of value." Albert Einstein